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John M. Brickman
Executive Director

*To J.P. Elia
FVI*

August 17, 1973

Memorandum to: Jack Birnbaum

From: John M. Brickman

Attached is a copy of our staff survey of suicides and preventive measures in other jurisdictions, as promised. As I explained to you, it is only a rough effort and no attempt has been made to confirm information or to quantify data in relation to New York City.

JMB.

JMB
Enclosure

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8/21/73*

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NATIONAL SURVEY OF SUICIDES AND PREVENTIVE MEASURES

1973 FOLLOW - UP REPORT

1. Atlanta (Fulton County)
2. Baltimore
3. Boston (Suffolk County)
4. Chicago (Cook County)
5. Cincinnati (Hamilton County)
- 6.-7. Cleveland (City and Cuyahoga County)
8. Dallas (City and County)
9. Detroit (Wayne County)
10. District of Columbia
11. Houston (Harris County)
12. Los Angeles
13. Miami (Dade County)
14. Montgomery (Alabama)
15. New Orleans
16. Philadelphia
17. Pittsburgh (Allegheny County)
18. St. Louis
19. San Diego
- 20-21. San Francisco (City and County)
- 22-23. Seattle (City and County)

2243
8/21/73

Institution: Fulton County Jail (Atlanta)

Contact: Warden Eason

Census: 696 inmates; all detainees

Capacity: 792

Type of Cells: Dormitory 8, 16, and 32 men

Suicides: Warden claims none for six-eight years

Preventive
Measures : Addicts are placed on Methadone detoxifi-
cation. Medical problems are referred to
a hospital ward until a doctor sees them.
Psychiatric evaluation is available.

Institution: Baltimore City Jail
Contact: Warden C. Kamka
Census: 970; over 90% detainees
Capacity: 2000
Type of Cells: Two-man cells
Suicides: Two in 1972; One in 1973

Preventive
Measures :

Inmates are admitted through a reception and diagnostic center. They are given a physical examination their first evening. All inmates are given a slide and tape orientation program, followed by a question-and-answer period. Social workers conduct a five minute interview with each man to determine whether any family emergencies exist. Any mental health potential problems are immediately referred to a psychologist. In addition to the extensive Social Workers orientation program, there are social workers on all the tiers.

Institution: Suffolk County Jail (Boston)

Contact: Captain Burns (Sherrif Eisenstadt)

Census: 184 men; 16 women - 90% pretrial

Capacity: 172

Type of Cells: All one-man cells, some doubled up

Suicides: two in 1972 by hanging; One in 1973 by O.D.

Preventive Measures : A large federally-funded ROR program helps keep the population down. If there are any suspected mental problems, the inmate is placed in a special observation section. A psychiatric staff is available.

Institution: Cook County Jail (Chicago)

Contact: Superintendent Moore

Census: 3700

Capacity: 1306 (110% Overcrowded)

Type of Cells: Various

Suicides: One in 1971, One in 1972, One in 1973

Preventive
Measures :

Censorship of mails is cited as previously having helped to prevent suicides. A psychiatrist is present to screen all new inmates. Those quickest to commit suicide were detainees accused of a domestic homicide. Among adolescents there is no pattern. Attempts were found most frequently within the first three weeks of incarceration. Possible suicidal inmates are housed in a make-shift dormitory in a regular tier.

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Institution: Hamilton County Jail (Cincinnati)
Contact: Asst. Warden W. Hesselbrock
Capacity: 220
Census: 280; all pretrial
Type of Cells: Two man cells, approx. 8' x 6'
Suicides: None in the last three years
Preventive Measures : Special hall guard is assigned to certain areas.

Institution: Cleveland City Jail

Contact: Office of Chief of Police

Census: 120; inmates vary from pretrial to misdemeanor sentenced to "invest" (investigation) detainees who are kept up to four days while their charges are being investigated, without any charges or arrest.

Capacity: 125

Suicides: Two in the last year (?)

Preventive Measures : "Loonies" are "really checked". Paper uniforms are issued. A Jail patrol is conducted every 1/2 hour. There is a methadone detox. program. Doctors patrol three times a day. All prisoners arrested for "impact" crimes are screened. (?)

Institution: Cuyahoga County Jail (Cleveland)
Contact: *****call the Colonel*****
Census: 450 - about 80 to 85 % pretrial
Capacity: 350
Suicides: Three or four in the last five years

Preventive
Measures :

A suicide prevention report has been prepared by classification officers. There is a large ROR "personal bail" project, and a bail investigator often spots problems which might have led to suicide and arranges alternative measures to incarceration. There is a full time crisis intervention officer. During the first 24 hours of incarceration, a 20-minute interview is in all cases held between the inmates and a social worker; there is a system for "instant welfare" for emergencies and for families who are affected by a man's or woman's incarceration. Families are contacted by the social workers. The crisis intervention officer is a "young, black sociologist" named Don Gibson; he has done many reports and has had tremendous success with his program - he can be reached through the County Jail.

Institution: Dallas City and County Jails

Contact: City: T.A. Renneberg, Director
County: Chief of Jail Operations

Census: City: 208; County: 1600

Capacity: City: 345; County: 1250

Suicides: None in city in last three years; 1 in county
two or three months ago.

Preventive
Measures : City: rapid processing and release; rapid
turnover. County: mental evaluation

101

United States and Canada

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1913-1914

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1915-1916

1916-1917
1917-1918
1918-1919

1919-1920
1920-1921
1921-1922

Institution: Wayne County Jail (Detroit)

Contact: Ron Johnson

Census: 500-600, 96% pre-trial detainees

Capacity: 799

Type of Cells: Single cells; 18 dormitory

Suicides: Three in 1971; one in 1972; none in 1973

Preventive
Measures :

Presently a social worker interviews all inmates as they are admitted. Those who are doubtful in any way are placed on a ten-man ward under extra security. Next month a federal grant is to begin, under which every inmate will be interviewed by a medical aide, a psychiatric social worker, and, if any difficult problems are revealed, the inmate will be referred to a psychiatrist.

Institution: District of Columbia Jail (Five Institutions)

Census: 3000

Capacity: 663 (Jail); 50 (Women's); 350 (Youth);
914 (Complex); 304 (Minimum security Facility)

Type of Cells: Open type medium security, dormitory jail
Men's Jail : 2 men in one-man cells

Suicides: One in 1973; Two in 1972

Preventive Measures : Those with suicidal tendencies are placed under close surveillance and a letter is sent to the Correction Board. The inmate is psychoanalyzed and examined. If he is determined to be a potential suicide, the facility will attempt to get a court order for the inmate to be hospitalized.

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Institution: Harris County Jail (Houston)

Contact: Captain in charge

Census: 710

Capacity: 510

Type of cells: Single-man cells

Suicides: Two in 1973

Preventive
Measures :

Overcrowding is not a factor in suicides. Delay in waiting to go to court, and insecurity about what will happen are important. Those with suicidal tendencies as well as all other mental cases are placed in a special cell block.

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Institution: Los Angeles County Jail

Contact: Inspector Howell

Census: 8500

Capacity: (?) ; operating at a "comfortable" level

Suicides: Three or Four in 1971; Four or Five in 1972
One so far this year.

Preventive
Measures : A psychiatrist is now assigned to the jail.
There are 10 to 12 attempts per month, most
within the first two hours after arrest.
All inmates are interviewed and are specially
attended to during the first few hours.

Institution: Dade County Jail (Miami)

Contact: Chief Robert Hillman

Census: 600, nearly all awaiting trial - there is a court order not to exceed 600.

Capacity: 600

Type of Cells: A few four-man cubicles; blocks accomodating 16 inmates, some single cells, dormitory cells accomodating eight-19 inmates each.

Suicides: Two in 1972; one or two in 1973.

Preventive Measures : Potential suicides are placed in one-man cells and stripped completely. The Department attempts to get a court order to commit the inmate to a hospital. A large number of officers conduct roving patrol.

Institution: New Orleans Parish Prison

Contact: Major Schaeffer

Census: 640; 75% pretrial detainees

Capacity: 450-500

Type of Cells: Eight dormitory-type tiers (56 men each)
Four-man cells

Suicides: None in the last three years

Preventive
Measures :

Since the middle of last year there has been a psychiatry program. Every inmate has a brief physical examination and screening when he enters. Potential suicides have a mental examination and officials attempt to have them put in a mental ward of a hospital. However, most are returned to their regular cells. A strongly suicidal inmate is placed with inmates who can watch him. Previously, potential suicides were chained to a bar near the lock-out section; this was abandoned by court order. There are no bedsheets in the cells, but inmates have the opportunity to hang themselves.

Institution: Montgomery (Alabama) County Jail

Contact: Warden Dan Cauthen

Census: 113; 85 awaiting trial

Capacity: 135

Suicides: None in last three years

Preventive
Measures : Nothing is allowed in the cell which can be
used to commit suicide. Anyone with
suicidal tendencies is placed in isolation
and observed.

Institution: Philadelphia City Prisons

Contact: Mr. Lyons

Census: 2100 pre-trial

Capacity: 2100

Type of Cells: Dormitory in one institution; Single man cells with two or three inmates

Suicides: Three in 1971, two in 1972, one in 1973

Preventive Measures : Watch out for drug problems. Try to know a great deal about inmate at time of entry. Try to communicate with inmate. They issue a questionnaire at the time of reception to try to pick up potential suicides.

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Institution: Allegheny County Jail (Pittsburgh)

Contact: ***Mr. Robinson***

Census: 449 daily average. totals: in 1970, 8992
(7643 pre-trial); in 1971, 7594 (6454 pre-trial);
in 1972 7190 (5970 pre-trial).

Capacity: 618

Type of Cells: Single cells, 5 feet wide, 12 feet long, 8 feet
high

Suicides: 1 in 1970; 1 in 1971; 3 in 1972; 1 in 1973.

Preventive
Measures : , Contact with personnel a key factor. After
last lockup, officers patrol constantly from
9 p.m. until 7 a.m. Count is conducted.
Cells cannot obstruct vision. Inmates must
sleep with their head facing out towards the
bars. Upon admission, two rangers give
an orientation; a copy of the rules is given
to each inmate and each man receives a medical
exam and a blood test and x-ray. There is a
request system by which any inmate may see the
warden at any time.

Institution: St. Louis City Jail

Contact: Captain Millsap

Census: 396

Capacity: 380

Type of Cells: two-man cells

Suicides: None in 1973; two in 1972

Preventive
Measures :

"Cellmate screams if inmate is attempting
suicide, and we prevent the crime."
There will be a psychiatric examination if the
inmate seems to be a potential suicide.

Institution: San Francisco City Jail
Contact: Captain of Police
Census: 400
Capacity: 570
Type of Cells: Mostly dormitory four to six man cells;
24 special isolation cells
Suicides: None in last three years
Preventive measures: No special measures for suicides

Institution: San Francisco County Jail
Contact: Chief Deputy Roy Bengstrom (A-1)
Census: 353
Capacity: 300
Type of Cells: Twelve man tanks, two man cells, six man cells
Suicides: None in the last three years

Preventive
Measures :

Many suicides in S.F. occur in police facilities in which suspects are often held for up to 72 hours before they are even arrested! In the prison, the San Quentin standard is used under which inmates of the same age group are placed together. Constant rounds are made by C.O.'s. Laxity of C.O.'s might be a factor in the Tombs. During night watch, one round is made at least every hour. One man with experience is responsible for making cell assignments. A potential suicide is never left alone. Potential suicides are placed in a cell block in which there are facing cells containing inmates who act as observers. One key question is to determine whether there are enough officials to conduct adequate night watch. Diet is extremely important in suicide prevention. Food should be appetizing. Much fresh fruit should be available. Processed sweets should be avoided at all costs (such as cake, ice cream, candy) because there is a high correlation with violence. The most effective preventive measure is to provide and make plentiful an adequate supply of natural multi-vitamins. Allow the inmates to have as much vitamin supplement as they might require--this has the effect of sharply reducing mental problems, not only among the mentally disturbed, but also among the entire prison population. Significantly, violence is also reduced when vitamins are taken regularly. Overcrowding is not a factor in suicides.

How
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JB

Institution: Seattle City Jail

Contact: Captain Carroll

Census: 225; 50% pre-trial

Capacity: 525

Suicides: None in 1973; two in 1972

Preventive
Measures :

Under a trial grant, a psychiatrist and nurse are helping to identify potential problems and place risks in institutions. There are special high-security cells, a Doctor is available, and there is a Methadone detoxification program.

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Institution: Seattle County Jail

Census: 200, of which 60% are in pretrial detention

Capacity: 620

Type of Cells: Four-man cells; some dormitories (45-50 men)

Suicides: None

Preventive Measures : Potential suicides are placed in isolation and watched.

